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[The Impact of Men's Health on Operational Readiness](#)

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If we take the fitness component out of the daily routine we often see a huge increase in unhealthy and dangerous social behaviors.

By Master Chief Hospital Corpsman Derek Petrin, command master chief, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center



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As a Master Chief Hospital Corpsman with almost a quarter century of Navy experience, a good chunk of which was spent working with operational Sailors and Marines, I've learned a thing or two about the importance of men's health and more specifically, about the impact of men's health on operational readiness.

From a holistic perspective, I believe that fitness is the key component to maintaining preservation of the force and family. There are so many triggers that test our Sailor's these days. If we take the fitness component out of the daily routine we often see a huge increase in unhealthy and dangerous social behaviors. Increases in tobacco and alcohol use bring their own baggage that can be linked to reducing the optimum physical, emotional and psychological performance. In an operational setting, the results can be disastrous. Think about the impact on reaction time in an environment where seconds matter.

As I see it, men's health and fitness go hand-in-hand. Over the course of my career, I've engaged in a variety of different fitness activities. Currently – I really love rowing on a Concept 2 rower. I injured my leg about eight years ago and learned how to row from one my guys who was on crew at Temple University. I did pretty well and started competing in indoor rowing tournaments three months later. Rowing is truly part of my weekly routine as I try to do at least 5000 Kilometers a day, five days a week.

So, here's where I "connect-the-dots" between men's health and operational readiness. I was fortunate over the course of my career to spend seven years working with SEAL Teams. My time working with the SEAL community was a tremendous test and privilege, both personally and professionally. The opportunity to have world class strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers and physical therapists was priceless. To learn the word fit is more important than skinny or muscular. To grasp the concept of functional movement prevents injury and promotes longevity will stay with me forever. The obvious benefit of being surrounded by some of the greatest competitor's I have ever seen – the

motivation to push myself a little further, a little harder and little longer. BUT... and here's the big "but," especially for men who tend to let pride override the common sense button that says "stop now before you injure yourself" ("injure" – in the context of men's health can infer the mental along with the physical)... MODERATION, MODERATION, MODERATION! Yes, this means exercise, if you're just starting out, alcohol consumption, at all times, and food (BBQ is here – you really don't need that 3rd cheeseburger).

Lastly, and especially for Sailors starting to hit 35-40 years old; please remember that "Rest=Reps and Sleep=equals strength!" Sleep hygiene is the true silent killer of today's society. Just because you spend the hours in the rack does not mean they are productive. Learning to take the steps to set up the best sleep experience will only translate to better performance in the gym, on the track or on your favorite machine.

Here at the [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center](#), we have the expertise and resources to help Sailors and Marines get onboard with and maintain a healthy lifestyle. And not just here. Wherever Navy Medicine is present, our Sailors and Marines have access to an unsurpassed wealth of knowledge and talent. Be fit... Be ready... Be well!

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